

Highlighting the Hofmeister Family Georgia Chapter of Hands and Voices



Names of family members and a brief description of their "place" in the family

John - dad - works as a Blind Rehabilitation Specialist at the Augusta VA Medical Center; loves skiing

Debbie - mom - works as a Teacher of Students who are Visually Impaired; loves to read and relax

Matthew - 9 year old son - loves to read, ride his bike and to build with legos

Immie - the dog - black lab who loves to eat and play

Which family member(s) has a hearing loss? Describe your family member's hearing loss

Matthew's bilateral sensori-neural hearing loss was identified when he was 1 and 1/2 years old. We do not know the cause of the hearing loss. We started to learn sign language as soon as we found out that he was deaf and tried a variety of hearing aids as well. He received a nucleus 24 cochlear implant when he was 2 and 1/2. We continued to sign after Matthew got the implant and worked hard to put words with the signs that he already knew (about 150 signs at the time of the implant). Matthew was able to use sign language as a bridge to spoken language. He attended speech classes 4 days/week and worked at home daily with his parents. Everything in our house is a language experience. At this time, Matthew is oral whenever the implant is on. When he takes the implant off (e.g. swimming, bath time), we sign to him so he can understand what is going on around him.

Identify your family's residence, school system, school.

We live in Evans, GA which is near Augusta. Matthew attends Blue Ridge Elementary school which is in Columbia County.

Describe your child's educational experience.

Matthew has participated in regular classes since preschool. We have worked closely with Matthew's teachers to make sure that they understand his needs as a student with a cochlear implant. Good communication has been essential for Matthew's success in regular public school. Overall, Matthew enjoys school.

What are the strengths of the individuals in your family?

The weaknesses?

We spend a lot of time with Matthew. We are able to take the time to make sure that all activities are language experiences. We need to make time to socialize more with other families.

How has Hands and Voices supported your family?

The Hands and Voices website and newsletter have been very valuable resources for us. We are looking forward to meeting new people in the Georgia Chapter.

